

## House Republican Press Release

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### **Republicans Outraged Over Democrats 'Back Door' Attempts To Obtain Taxpayer Returns**



HARTFORD - Republicans leaders today praised Gov. M. Jodi Rell for opposing Democratic efforts to provide millions of individual and corporate tax returns to a legislative committee, and blasted the Democrats for trying to violate taxpayers' privacy to formulate partisan tax policy.

They assailed Attorney General Richard Blumenthal for his legal opinion supporting his fellow Democrats' efforts to have the legislative Program Review and Investigations Committee members review the tax returns that would be used in the tax study underway. The Republican Senate co-chair of the panel also said House Speaker James Amann and Majority Leader Christopher Donovan misrepresented her position on the matter in a letter to Blumenthal seeking the opinion because she specifically opposed making the returns available.

"This is an outrageous abuse of taxpayers' rights to have legislators and staff members pore over private tax returns that could then be used to promote a partisan political tax policy," said House Minority Leader Robert M. Ward. "This was a backdoor attempt to obtain these records. At a time when across the country people are concerned about ever increasing assaults on personal privacy and identity theft, the Democrats want to be even more invasive."

Rell today said she expects the Department of Revenue Services to protect taxpayers' rights and preserve their privacy.

Ward added, "Taxpayers understand they have an obligation to provide their returns to the state and federal governments but there is an explicit expectation of privacy that the Democrats want to violate. There is no valid reason for legislators to look at individual taxpayers' returns."

Ward said the records grab was unwarranted and that the committee work could take place without the returns. "The Democrats want a computer disc with every Connecticut taxpayer's returns as well as social security number. It's flat out wrong," Ward said.

Sen. Catherine Cook of Mystic, the Republican co-chair of the committee said, "I am very distressed that in a letter dated Sept. 12, 2005, Speaker of the House James Amann and Majority Leader Christopher Donovan wrote to the Attorney General implying that as co-chairman, I had verbally requested individual taxpayer information to use in the committee's study of the Connecticut tax system. This is most certainly untrue," Cook said. "Furthermore, I specifically directed the staff of the committee to use other sources rather than individual returns for our study."

Senate Leader Louis DeLuca of Woodbury said, "The idea that a state legislative committee would think this is an appropriate exercise of their power is unnerving. What truly bothers me, however, is that the Speaker of the House would misrepresent the words of one of my caucus members to try and include her as

'bi-partisan' cover for what is clearly a Democrat plan. In both cases, these are examples of an arrogant majority party that no longer understands the limitations of its role in state government."

Ward said the entire committee must make such a request for information and in any event, Cook specifically opposed the move. Ward said, "My 20 years experience in the legislature tells me that once lawmakers have access to personal tax records, privacy goes out the window."

Rep. Kevin Witkos, Republican committee member from Canton said, ""The members of the Program Review and Investigations Committee were never notified that this information was being sought. This action by Democratic leaders mars a non-partisan committee with partisan political actions, and ultimately gives legislators a window into every Connecticut resident's household finances. It's an enormous invasion of privacy."